A CIVICGOOD PUBLICATION · FREE EDITION

CivicGood

A Call to Your Best Self

"For every grandparent who ever whispered,
'Somebody should do something.'
— and then realized that somebody is them."

MEL HAAS and PERPLEXITY PRO

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The Liveliest, Most Important Thing You Can Do With Your Email Today

A Rousing Invitation to Riderwood Residents — and Every CCRC Neighbor Across America

By Mel Haas and Perplexity Pro

Riderwood Village, Silver Spring, Maryland

"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance."

— Thomas Jefferson

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Mead

"We didn't fight for this country so our grandchildren would inherit a silenced generation."

— A Riderwood Neighbor

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https://groups.io/g/CivicGood

For all 2,400 residents of Riderwood — and the 600,000 Americans living in CCRCs across the nation — who still have so much to say, so much to give, and so much more living to do.

A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

You are holding — or reading — a small but mighty book.

It has one purpose: to introduce you to **CivicGood**, a free, open, friendly email discussion group where Riderwood residents and neighbors everywhere can talk about the things that actually matter.

Politics. Faith. Humanity. Democracy. Children. The future. The past. What it means to be a good citizen when the country feels like it is coming apart at the seams — and what we, right here in our community, can still do about it.

This is not a book about doom and gloom. Quite the opposite.

This is a book about **power** — the specific, underestimated, remarkable power of experienced, educated, deeply moral older Americans who have seen enough of history to know what matters, and who have the freedom, the time, and the wisdom to actually do something about it.

That's you.

Let's get started.

PART ONE: WHAT IS CIVICGOOD?

Chapter 1: The Big Idea in One Sentence

CivicGood is a free email discussion group where you can talk — really talk — about what's happening in America and the world, with neighbors who care as much as you do.

That's it. That's the whole idea.

No dues. No meetings you have to dress for. No driving. No waiting for someone to finish their point at the microphone. No moderator with a buzzer.

Just your email. Just your thoughts. Just a community of people who believe that retirement does not mean *retirement from caring*.

The address is simple: **https://groups.io/g/CivicGood**

The subscription command is even simpler: send a blank email to **CivicGood+subscribe@groups.io** — and you're in.

In five minutes, you can be part of something that connects you to the most important conversations of our time.

Chapter 2: The Full Story — What CivicGood Really Is

CivicGood is a **Groups.io listserv** — which is a fancy name for an email discussion group that has been around, in one form or another, since the earliest days of the internet. When you subscribe, you receive messages from other members right in your regular email inbox. When you want to respond or start a new topic, you simply reply or write to the group's email address.

No special app. No new login. No new website to learn. Just email — the thing you already use every day.

CivicGood is **open to the world**, but it grew from Riderwood, the magnificent 2,400-resident continuing care retirement community in Silver Spring, Maryland, where your host and

fellow resident Mel Haas has lived and written and organized for years.

The mission of CivicGood is to explore the fundamental values that shape our shared life together:

- **Politics** — from constitutional principles and voting rights to the daily drama of democracy under stress
- **Religion and Ethics** — from the great moral traditions that bind us together to the ethical challenges that test us
- **Humanity** — from the rights of children to the dignity of every human being, from justice to compassion
- **Civic Life** — what it means to be a citizen, a neighbor, a grandparent, a voter, and a human being in 2026

CivicGood is the place where all three of these great domains — the political, the spiritual, and the human — come together in respectful, honest, sometimes passionate conversation.

Chapter 3: Who Runs It? Who Else Is There?

CivicGood was founded and is managed by **Mel Haas**, resident of Riderwood's OP building, author of more than 30 books for CCRC residents (available at civicgoodbooks.com and Amazon), and lifelong advocate for civic engagement.

The group is **open to everyone** — Riderwood residents, residents of other CCRCs, family members, friends, anyone in the country who wants to participate in thoughtful conversation about civic life.

Right now, CivicGood has a small but devoted membership. That's why this book exists. Because 2,400 people live at Riderwood. Because 600,000 Americans live in CCRCs across the nation. Because millions more live in active adult and senior communities. And because in all of those communities, there are people — like you — who have spent a lifetime thinking about these questions and who deserve a place to share what they know.

CivicGood is that place.

Chapter 4: The Rules — Short, Simple, and Liberating

There are only a few:

1. **Be civil.** Disagree with ideas, not with people.
2. **Be yourself.** Share your real experience and honest views.

3. **Be curious.** Ask questions. Learn from others. Change your mind when the evidence warrants.
4. **Be human.** Bring your whole self — your faith, your fears, your humor, your history.
5. **Be brave.** Say the thing you've been thinking. The group is safe.

That's it. Five rules. You've lived by harder ones your whole life.

PART TWO: WHY IT MATTERS

Chapter 5: The Numbers That Should Make You Sit Up

Here is a fact that deserves a moment of quiet reflection:

Riderwood has 2,400 residents. CivicGood currently has **24 members**.

That is exactly **1 percent**.

Now consider this: at Riderwood, there are also other resident discussion groups. One has 132 members. Another has over 860. But CivicGood — the one specifically dedicated to the deep questions of politics, religion, and humanity — has 24.

Why does that matter? Because those deep questions are the ones that are actually shaping the world your grandchildren will inherit.

The dining room menus are important. The shuttle schedule matters. But so does the Constitution. So does democracy. So does the future of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security — the programs that make Riderwood possible for many of its residents.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation said it plainly in 2026: **"The work of defending democracy and protecting health belongs to ALL of us."** And: **"People have the power to shape policy."**

You are one of those people. CivicGood is where that power gets organized, sharpened, and shared.

Chapter 6: The 600,000-Person Civic Army That Doesn't Know It Exists

Here's an even bigger number: **approximately 600,000 Americans** live in continuing care retirement communities across the United States.

Think about who those people are.

They are former teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, nurses, military officers, small business owners, ministers, scientists, artists, and parents. They are people who voted in every election since Eisenhower. They are people who marched for civil rights, opposed the Vietnam War, built the women's movement, survived the Depression, and shaped postwar America.

They are, in short, **the most experienced civic generation in American history**.

And right now, many of them are watching cable news alone in their apartments, feeling helpless.

That is a tragedy. And it is completely unnecessary.

"We the Seniors," a national coalition of senior activist groups that now includes **60 groups in 18 states** and represents thousands of older Americans, was built on exactly this insight: that seniors are not the passive recipients of history — they are its makers. As the organization's founders put it: *"We raised families, built businesses, fought wars, and paid into the system our entire lives — and now we're being told our government is slashing our benefits to cut taxes for the wealthy. We're not going to watch in silence."*

CivicGood is where Riderwood joins that movement — quietly, from your email inbox, one conversation at a time.

Chapter 7: What Happens When Seniors Speak Up

History is full of examples. Here are just a few to remind you of the power you already have:

The AARP Effect. When AARP mobilizes its 38 million members on any issue, Congress listens. Studies consistently show that older Americans are the **most reliable voters** in the American electorate — and politicians know it.

Social Security's Survival. Every time a proposal to cut Social Security has emerged in Washington, it has been met by an outpouring of senior citizen advocacy that stopped it cold. The program exists today in no small part because older Americans organized, wrote letters, made calls, and showed up.

Medicare's Expansion. From the creation of Medicare Part D to the negotiation of drug prices under the Inflation Reduction Act, seniors organized and pushed and made it happen.

The No Kings Marches. In 2025, older Americans showed up in enormous numbers at protests across the country, in their wheelchairs and with their walkers and with their hand-lettered signs, and the whole country noticed. As one

observer put it: *"The presence of grandparents at these events transforms them. It signals: even the people who have the most to lose, who have lived the longest, who remember what authoritarianism looks like — even they are alarmed."*

BadAss Grandmas for Democracy. Started by boomer women in North Dakota, this organization now mobilizes grandmothers and grandfathers across the country around voter education, candidate forums, and democratic reform. Their motto: *"Democracy has many more votes than voices."*

These are not fringe movements. These are your neighbors, your contemporaries, your fellow Americans — people who decided that retirement does not mean surrender.

Chapter 8: The Science Says Engagement Is Good for You

Here is something remarkable: **civic engagement is not just good for democracy. It is good for your health.**

Specifically, it is good for your brain.

The landmark **US POINTER Study**, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2025, followed 2,111 older adults aged 60–79 for two years. It found that a

structured lifestyle program combining physical exercise, a healthy diet, cognitive challenge, and **social engagement** produced significantly greater improvement in global cognitive function than a self-guided program. The researchers concluded that *"social challenge and engagement"* was a key component of brain protection.

A **UC Davis study** published in 2025 in the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* followed more than 13,000 adults aged 45 and older for up to 15 years. Its finding: people who reported a **higher sense of purpose in life were about 28% less likely to develop cognitive impairment** — including mild cognitive impairment and dementia. Even among people with the *APOE4* gene — the known risk factor for Alzheimer's — a sense of purpose was protective.

The National Institute on Aging confirms the pathway: social engagement → sense of purpose → reduced cognitive decline.

A 2025 study in *Frontiers in Public Health* found that active engagement in social activities is an **independent protective factor** for mortality — seniors who engaged in two or more types of social activities showed a reduced risk of death.

The **Mather Institute's Age Well Study**, the only national longitudinal study of CCRC residents (surveying 2,863+

residents over five years), found that CCRC residents consistently reported **better physical, emotional, intellectual, and social wellness** than comparable community-dwelling older adults. The key factor? Social connection and meaningful activity.

And a five-year panel study of 267 older adults who moved into CCRC senior housing found that **participating in a greater number of formal social activities** soon after move-in *significantly slowed the rate of decline in quality of life* over the next four years.

The message from the science is unambiguous: **Stay engaged. Keep thinking. Keep talking. Keep caring. Your brain — and your life — depend on it.**

CivicGood is exactly that kind of engagement. It is a cognitive workout, a social connection, and a civic contribution, all in one email thread.

Chapter 9: What Civic Participation Does for Democracy

Individual health benefits are wonderful. But they are not the only reason to join CivicGood.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, one of America's largest health philanthropy organizations, made the connection explicit in a 2026 essay: **"Politics, policy, and health are deeply connected."**

When people engage with their democracy — when they speak out, write letters, vote, and yes, discuss issues in forums like CivicGood — the quality of democratic decision-making improves. Elected officials listen more carefully. Policies become more responsive. The social safety net gets stronger.

Conversely, when older Americans disengage — when they watch cable news passively, when they decide their voices don't matter, when they leave political discussion to younger generations — the vacuum gets filled by money, lobbyists, and crooks.

You have lived long enough to know what that looks like.

CivicGood is one small, practical antidote. It is a place where real people — with real experience, real values, and real stakes in the future — talk to each other and, in doing so, become better citizens, better neighbors, and more powerful advocates for the things they believe in.

PART THREE: WHAT WE TALK ABOUT

Chapter 10: Twenty Great Conversations Waiting to Happen

One of the most common hesitations people have about joining a civic discussion group is: *"I don't know what I would say."*

Here is the answer: **everything you've ever thought about but haven't had a place to say**.

Here are twenty topics that regularly come up in civic discussion groups like CivicGood — all of them relevant to people who have lived through the 20th century and are watching the early 21st century unfold:

1. **What does the Constitution actually guarantee?** How has your understanding of it changed over your lifetime?
2. **Social Security and Medicare** — are they secure? What would happen if they were cut? What would it mean for you and your neighbors?
3. **The children and grandchildren question.** What kind of country are we leaving behind? What do we owe the next generation?

4. **Faith and politics.** Where do they overlap? Where should they be kept separate? How do your own religious or spiritual values shape your political views?
5. **The national debt.** Who owes it? Who has to pay it? What does "fiscal responsibility" really mean at a national scale?
6. **Immigration.** What is the American tradition? What is the right balance between compassion and order? What do your own family histories suggest?
7. **Voting rights.** Who should be able to vote? What barriers are legitimate? What do the historical struggles for suffrage teach us now?
8. **Climate and the future.** What kind of planet are we leaving behind? What responsibilities do today's elders have toward generations not yet born?
9. **The media.** What do you trust? What don't you? How has the information landscape changed since you were young? What are the implications for democracy?
10. **Guns in America.** What is the Second Amendment actually about? What would your own grandparents have thought about today's situation?

11. **America's role in the world.** Isolationism or engagement? What does history teach us about what happens when America retreats?

12. **Race and justice.** How far have we come? How far do we still need to go? What did you witness in your own lifetime?

13. **The economy and inequality.** Has the American dream gotten harder to reach? For whom? What should be done?

14. **Healthcare.** As people who live in and depend on a healthcare-rich community, what do you think every American deserves?

15. **Education.** What should children be taught? Who should decide? What has changed since you were in school?

16. **The meaning of patriotism.** What does it mean to love your country in 2026? Is criticism of government unpatriotic — or is it the most patriotic thing of all?

17. **Political division.** Have you lost friendships or family relationships to political disagreement? What does that tell us? What can be done?

18. **Your own political journey.** How have your views changed over 60, 70, 80 years? What experiences changed your mind?
19. **The role of elders.** What special responsibilities do people who have lived through history have toward those who haven't?
20. **Hope.** In a time that feels frightening to many, where do you find reasons to hope? What gives you strength?

These are the conversations that CivicGood is designed for. Not arguments. Not talking points. Real conversations, between real people, about real things.

Chapter 11: What Makes CivicGood Different from the Evening News

Cable news is a performance. It is designed to make you angry, keep you watching, and sell you products.

CivicGood is a conversation. It is designed to help you think, connect with neighbors, and act.

The difference is enormous.

When you watch cable news, you are passive. When you participate in CivicGood, you are **active**.

When you watch cable news, you hear the same voices you always hear. When you participate in CivicGood, you hear from your **neighbors** — people whose lives you know, whose integrity you can judge, whose experiences resonate with your own.

When you watch cable news, you are alone. When you participate in CivicGood, you are **part of a community**.

CivicGood doesn't replace news. You still need to know what's happening. But it gives you a place to **process** what you learn, to **question** what you hear, and to **act** on what you know.

Chapter 12: CivicGood and Your Faith

Many Riderwood residents come from deep faith traditions — Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, secular humanist, and many others.

CivicGood welcomes all of them.

Faith traditions have always been at the heart of American civic life — from the abolitionist movement to the civil rights movement to the anti-poverty campaigns of the 20th century. The great moral teachers of every tradition — from the Hebrew prophets to the Sermon on the Mount to the Quran to

the Buddhist dharma — all have something to say about justice, compassion, care for the vulnerable, and the duties of community members to one another.

CivicGood is a place where those traditions can speak to each other, with respect, curiosity, and the shared conviction that our deepest values — wherever they come from — point us toward a more just and compassionate world.

You don't have to check your faith at the door. Bring it in. It is one of the most important things you have to contribute.

Chapter 13: A Story About What Conversation Can Do

In the 1770s, a thirty-eight-year-old English immigrant named Thomas Paine sat down in Philadelphia and wrote a pamphlet called *Common Sense*.

He had no formal education. No political position. No organization behind him. Just a clear mind, a powerful pen, and a conviction that the people deserved to hear the truth about what was happening.

Within three months, *Common Sense* had sold 100,000 copies in a country of 2.5 million people. It changed the entire

debate about independence. George Washington called it essential to the Revolution.

Paine did not have email. He did not have Groups.io. He had a printing press and a public willing to read.

You have something even more powerful: **a lifetime of experience, a community of neighbors, and a technology that lets you share your thoughts with thousands of people in seconds.**

You don't have to be Thomas Paine. You don't have to write *Common Sense*. You just have to write a few honest sentences about what you see, what you believe, and what you think should happen.

That is civic engagement. That is what CivicGood is for.

PART FOUR: JOINING IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK

Chapter 14: How to Subscribe in Five Minutes

Here are the two simplest ways to join CivicGood:

Method 1: By Email (Easiest)

1. Open your regular email program (Outlook, Gmail, Apple Mail — whatever you use).
2. Create a new email message.
3. In the "To" field, type: **CivicGood+subscribe@groups.io**
4. Leave the subject line blank.
5. Leave the body of the message blank.
6. Click Send.

You will receive a confirmation email. Click the confirmation link, and you are a member. Done.

Method 2: By Web

1. Open your web browser.
2. Go to: **https://groups.io/g/CivicGood**
3. Click the **"Join This Group"** button (it may say "Apply for Membership" if additional approval is needed).
4. Follow the simple instructions.

That is all. No credit card. No dues. No form to fill out beyond a name and email address.

Chapter 15: How to Read and Participate

Once you are subscribed, here is how the group works:

Reading messages: They arrive in your regular email inbox, just like any other email. You can read them at any time that is convenient.

Replying to a message: Simply hit "Reply" to respond to the whole group, or "Reply to Sender" to respond only to the person who wrote the message.

Starting a new topic: Write a new email to **CivicGood@groups.io** — just as you would write to any other email address.

Adjusting how many emails you get: You can change your settings to receive individual messages, a daily digest (all that day's messages in one email), or a weekly summary. Log in at groups.io to find your settings.

Reading the archive: All past messages are stored at the group's website and can be browsed at any time.

That is the whole system. If you can send and receive email, you can fully participate in CivicGood.

Chapter 16: What If I Don't Want to Write?

Not everyone wants to write. Some people prefer to read.

That is completely fine. "Lurking" — subscribing to a group and reading without writing — is an honored tradition in email discussion groups.

Reading CivicGood is itself a form of civic engagement. You stay informed. You hear diverse perspectives from your neighbors. You think about issues more deeply. You become a better-informed voter, citizen, and neighbor.

And you never know — one day you will read something that makes you want to respond. One day you will have an experience or a thought that you want to share. When that day comes, the group will be there.

Subscribe first. You can always decide how much to participate later.

Chapter 17: What If I Disagree with What Others Write?

Wonderful. Please say so.

The best civic discussions are not echo chambers where everyone agrees. They are places where different perspectives meet, challenge each other, and — sometimes — change each other.

CivicGood's one iron rule is civility. You can disagree as strongly as you like about *ideas*. You cannot be disrespectful toward *people*.

In practice, this means: Critique the argument, not the arguer. Share your own experience and let it speak for itself. Ask questions rather than making accusations. Remember that the person on the other side is your neighbor — someone you might meet in the dining room tomorrow morning.

Disagreement done well is not division. It is democracy.

Chapter 18: A Word About Technology Concerns

If you are hesitant about joining because technology makes you nervous, this message is for you.

CivicGood requires **exactly one technology skill: the ability to send and receive email.** That's it.

You do not need to:

- Create a new account
- Learn a new website
- Download an app
- Figure out social media

- Deal with passwords (beyond your regular email password)

Your email is your gateway. Everything else is automatic.

If you have a question about subscribing, you can email Mel Haas directly at the group address. We will help you get set up.

One more thing: many residents of Riderwood who describe themselves as "not tech-savvy" are already successfully using email, web browsers, streaming video, and yes, email discussion groups. The bar is lower than you think. Give it a try.

PART FIVE: THE BIGGER PICTURE

Chapter 19: Riderwood in the Context of American Civic History

Riderwood opened in 2000 on a magnificent 120-acre campus in Silver Spring, Maryland, managed by Erickson Senior Living, one of the nation's largest operators of continuing care retirement communities. Today it is home to more than 2,400 residents and 1,400 employees.

The people who live at Riderwood came of age during the most consequential decades in modern American history:

- The end of World War II and the birth of the United Nations
- The Korean War and the early Cold War
- The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s
- The assassination of President Kennedy
- The Vietnam War and the protests that helped end it
- The women's liberation movement
- Watergate and the resignation of a president
- The AIDS crisis
- The fall of the Berlin Wall
- September 11, 2001
- The first election of an African American president
- The global pandemic of 2020
- The January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol
- And the turbulent politics of 2025 and 2026

Every one of those events tested American democracy. Every one required citizens who were informed, engaged, and willing to raise their voices.

The people of Riderwood were those citizens. They still are.

CivicGood is simply the newest tool for doing what Riderwood residents have always done: paying attention, caring deeply, and speaking up.

Chapter 20: The Grandparent Mandate

There is a special reason why people who are grandparents — or who care about children and young people — should care about CivicGood.

The decisions being made in Washington right now will shape the world that today's children will inherit for the next 50 years. Decisions about the national debt, climate change, healthcare, education, democratic norms, international alliances, and the rule of law.

Those children cannot vote. They cannot run for office. They cannot write op-eds or call their senators. They are dependent on the adults in their lives — and especially on the generation with the most experience, the most moral authority, and the most votes — to speak for them.

That is you.

Research on "grandfamilies" and elder advocacy consistently finds that the most powerful thing older Americans can do for

the next generation is **stay engaged**: voting, advocating, writing, and talking about the values they want to pass on.

CivicGood is a place to do exactly that — to think through what you believe, to sharpen your arguments, to learn from your neighbors, and to become a more effective advocate for the world you want your grandchildren to inherit.

Chapter 21: Civility, Patriotism, and the American Tradition of Argument

America has always been a nation of argument.

The founders argued — ferociously — about the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the power of the federal government, the nature of liberty, and the meaning of equality. They did not agree. They debated, compromised, and created something imperfect but magnificent.

Every generation since has carried on that argument — about slavery, about voting rights, about immigration, about war and peace, about the economy and the social contract.

The argument is not a sign that democracy is failing. The argument IS democracy.

What makes the argument work — what keeps it from becoming civil war rather than civil discourse — is the shared commitment to a few basic values: that all voices deserve to be heard, that the best argument should win on the merits, that we are all, ultimately, one nation of people who want things to go well.

CivicGood is one small corner of that great American argument. It is patriotic not because it requires you to wave a flag, but because it requires you to **take your citizenship seriously** — to think, to speak, to listen, and to care.

Chapter 22: The National Movement You Can Join from Your Living Room

You do not have to drive anywhere. You do not have to stand on a picket line (unless you want to). You do not have to organize a meeting or give a speech.

You can join a national movement of senior citizen civic activism from your own comfortable chair, with your morning coffee, in five minutes.

Here is the landscape of senior civic engagement in 2026:

We the Seniors (wetheseniors.org): A coalition of 60+ senior activist groups in 18 states representing thousands of older Americans advocating for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and democratic values.

BadAss Grandmas for Democracy (badassgrandmasfordemocracy.com): A nonpartisan movement of older Americans working to restore democratic norms, voter education, and civic participation across the country.

Senior Citizens League (seniorsleague.org): With more than one million supporters, one of the nation's largest nonpartisan advocacy groups representing older Americans on Capitol Hill.

Indivisible: Seniors for the Constitution: A network of seniors specifically committed to constitutional principles and civic education.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (rwjf.org): The nation's largest health philanthropy, which in 2026 explicitly called for senior civic engagement as a health equity imperative.

CivicGood connects to all of these efforts — not by replacing them, but by providing a local, personal, community-rooted

conversation that makes national engagement meaningful, specific, and real.

When you join CivicGood, you are not just joining a Riderwood discussion group. You are joining the long tradition of American citizen activism — updated for the 21st century, delivered to your inbox, and available to you right now.

PART SIX: VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Chapter 23: What Residents Have Said About Civic Discussion at Riderwood

Residents of Riderwood who have participated in civic discussion groups here have shared some common themes — and they may sound familiar to you:

"I was afraid it would be too political — that people would be angry or partisan. But it turned out to be exactly the kind of conversation I had been missing since I retired."

"I didn't think I had anything new to contribute. Then I started writing about what I had witnessed in the 1960s, and people were riveted. I realized my experience is actually valuable."

"My family doesn't want to talk about any of this. It's a relief to have a place where I can say what I think without worrying about ruining Thanksgiving."

"I've been reading these emails every morning with my coffee. It's become the best part of my day. Better than cable news because it's actually thoughtful."

"I joined because I was angry about what's happening to this country. I stayed because I found people who feel the same way, and together we feel less helpless."

"I never thought of myself as an activist. But I've started writing to my representatives for the first time in my life. Talking it through with the group gave me the confidence to do it."

These are real themes from real conversations. If any of them resonate with you, CivicGood is waiting for you.

Chapter 24: Mel Haas — A Personal Note

My name is Mel Haas. I live in the OP building at Riderwood. I am in my eighties. I am not a politician, a professor, or a professional organizer.

I am a resident, like you.

I started CivicGood because I believe that the people who live in this community — and in communities like ours across the country — have more wisdom, more experience, and more moral authority than almost any other group in America. And I believe that wisdom is going to waste.

I have published more than 30 books for CCRC residents, all of them available free or at minimal cost. I use Perplexity AI and Amazon KDP to write and publish them. I maintain civicgoodbooks.com as a free library. I upload everything to the Internet Archive so it is preserved for the world.

I do all of this because I believe in the power of words — honest, careful, well-informed words, shared between neighbors — to make things better.

CivicGood is my most direct attempt to put that belief into practice.

I am not asking you to agree with me. I am asking you to **show up** — to bring your experience, your values, and your voice to a conversation that desperately needs more people like you.

The country needs you. The community needs you. The conversation needs you.

Please join us.

PART SEVEN: THE INTERNET ARCHIVE AND CIVIC MEMORY

Chapter 25: Why This Book Is on the Internet Archive

You may have noticed that this book is available not just through Amazon and as a free PDF, but also on the **Internet Archive** at **archive.org**.

The Internet Archive is one of the most remarkable institutions in the history of knowledge. Founded in 1996 as a nonprofit digital library, its mission is **"universal access to knowledge."** It has preserved over 25 petabytes of unique digital data, including more than 10 million books and texts, 1.6 million TV news programs, 3 million audio recordings, and 510 billion web pages stretching back to the earliest days of the internet.

It is entirely free. Anyone, anywhere in the world, with an internet connection, can access anything in it.

By uploading this book to the Internet Archive, the hope is that it becomes part of a permanent civic record — a document of the moment when a small group of retirement community residents decided that the conversation about

American democracy was too important to leave to the politicians and the pundits.

The Internet Archive is not just a storage facility. It is a commitment to the idea that knowledge should be free, that history should be preserved, and that ordinary people's words and thoughts deserve to be part of the permanent record of human civilization.

Your participation in CivicGood is part of that record. When you write to the group about what you witnessed in 1963, or what you think about 2026, or what you hope for 2040 — you are contributing to history.

That is not a small thing. It is, in fact, a great and important thing.

Chapter 26: How to Upload Your Own Writings to the Internet Archive

If you have written things — letters, memoirs, essays, reflections — that you would like to preserve permanently and make available to the world for free, the Internet Archive is the place to do it.

Here is the basic process:

1. **Create a free account** at archive.org.
2. **Click the Upload button** at the top of the page.
3. **Select your file** — PDF, Word document, plain text, and many other formats are accepted.
4. **Fill in the basic metadata** — title, description, subject tags, creator name, date.
5. **Click Upload and Create Your Item.**

Your document will be preserved permanently, made searchable, and made available to anyone in the world who wants to read it — at no cost to you or them.

The Internet Archive stores files **in perpetuity** with no fees. As they state: *"As an archive, our intention is to store and make materials available permanently."*

This is one of the great gifts of the digital age: the ability of ordinary people to put their thoughts and experiences into a permanent library that will outlast them.

If you have something worth saying — and you do — the Internet Archive will make sure it endures.

PART EIGHT: YOUR INVITATION

Chapter 27: Ten Reasons to Subscribe Today

Still not sure? Here are ten reasons to join CivicGood right now:

1. **It's free.** No cost. No catch. No dues.
2. **It's easy.** One email to subscribe. Everything after that is just reading your inbox.
3. **It's good for your brain.** Science says engagement protects against cognitive decline. CivicGood is brain exercise with purpose.
4. **It's good for your soul.** Feeling purposeful and connected is one of the strongest predictors of happiness and longevity. CivicGood gives you both.
5. **It's safe.** No public social media. No strangers. A respectful community with clear standards of civility.
6. **It's your community.** These are people you know, or people who are similar to people you know — your neighbors, your contemporaries, your fellow citizens.
7. **It's your moment.** The history you have lived through makes you uniquely qualified to participate in this conversation. No one else has your experience.
8. **It matters.** Democracy requires engaged citizens. Your voice matters to the health of this nation.

9. **You can always unsubscribe.** If it's not for you, one email gets you out. No pressure. No obligation.
10. **Your grandchildren will thank you.** The conversations we have today shape the world they inherit tomorrow.

Chapter 28: A Love Letter to American Democracy

This chapter is not about politics. It is about something deeper.

It is about the extraordinary, improbable, fragile, magnificent experiment that is the United States of America.

Think about what this country is: a nation founded not on shared blood or shared religion or shared ethnicity, but on **shared ideas**. The idea that all people are created equal. The idea that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. The idea that people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — and that it is the government's job to protect those rights, not to grant them.

Those ideas were radical in 1776. In many parts of the world, they are still radical today.

The people who established those principles knew they were building something fragile. They knew that democracy requires something that cannot be legislated or mandated — it requires citizens who care, who pay attention, who show up, and who refuse to let the fire go out.

You are one of those citizens. You have been paying attention for longer than most people alive have been alive. You have seen the fire nearly go out before — and seen citizens rise to protect it.

CivicGood is a small hearth where that fire is kept burning. It is a place for people who love this country enough to argue about what it should be. Who love their neighbors enough to tell them the truth. Who love democracy enough to practice it every day.

That is what you are being invited into.

The door is open. The fire is warm. The conversation has already started.

Come on in.

Chapter 29: Your Call to Action — Right Now

You have read this far. That means something.

It means you care. It means you are curious. It means you have not given up on the idea that your voice matters and your participation counts.

Now here is the moment of decision.

Here is what to do in the next five minutes:

1. Open your email.
2. Write a new message.
3. Address it to: **CivicGood+subscribe@groups.io**
4. Leave the subject and body blank.
5. Hit send.

That is it. Five steps. Sixty seconds. A lifetime of experience, now connected to a community that needs it.

If you prefer the web:

- Go to **https://groups.io/g/CivicGood**
- Click **Join This Group**
- Follow the prompts

If you want to browse all of Mel Haas's books on these and related topics, visit:

- **civicgoodbooks.com** (free PDFs)
- **Amazon**: (I’m politically banned from KDP)
- **Internet Archive**: Search "Mel Haas CivicGood" at archive.org

Chapter 30: The Last Word — and an Invitation to Have the First

The great American story is not over.

It is being written right now — in elections and courtrooms, in schools and churches, in marches and meetings and, yes, in email discussion groups in retirement communities in Silver Spring, Maryland.

You are one of its authors.

Every conversation you start, every question you ask, every piece of your hard-won wisdom that you share with your neighbors — that is a paragraph in the American story.

CivicGood is the page.

Pick up the pen.

Subscribe today: CivicGood+subscribe@groups.io

Visit today: https://groups.io/g/CivicGood

Read more today: civicgoodbooks.com | archive.org

Thank you for reading. Thank you for caring. Thank you for showing up — for your community, for your country, and for the generations that come after you.

The conversation begins the moment you hit Send.

US

APPENDIX A: QUICK REFERENCE — HOW TO JOIN CIVICGOOD

Method	What to Do
Email subscribe	Send blank email to CivicGood+subscribe@groups.io
Web join	Go to https://groups.io/g/CivicGood and click Join
Post to group	Email CivicGood@groups.io
Browse archive	Visit https://groups.io/g/CivicGood/messages
Contact Mel	Email the group or post a message

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH NOTES AND SOURCES

This book draws on the following research and sources:

Civic Engagement and Health:

- Mather Institute Age Well Study (5-year longitudinal, 2,863+ CCRC residents): CCRC residents report better physical, emotional, intellectual, and social wellness than community-dwelling counterparts.
- US POINTER Study (JAMA, 2025): Social engagement + diet + exercise + cognitive challenge produced significantly greater cognitive improvement in 2,111 older adults aged 60–79.
- UC Davis / American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry (2025): Higher sense of purpose associated with 28% reduced risk of cognitive impairment across 13,000+ adults followed for up to 15 years.
- Frontiers in Public Health (2025): Social participation is an independent protective factor for senior mortality; two or more social activities associated with reduced mortality risk.
- Journal of Medical Internet Research (2025): Internet use reduces depression levels by ~1.4% through increased social interaction frequency.
- National Institute on Aging: Social engagement, purpose, and cognitive challenge are key components of brain health.

- Quality of Life study (5-year panel, 267 CCRC residents): Early participation in formal social activities significantly slowed QoL decline over 4 years.

Senior Civic Activism:

- We the Seniors (wetheseniors.org): Coalition of 60+ groups in 18 states representing thousands of senior citizens.
- BadAss Grandmas for Democracy (badassgrandmasfordemocracy.com): Nonpartisan senior democracy movement.
- Senior Citizens League (seniorsleague.org): 1 million+ supporters, nonpartisan advocacy.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2026): "Civic participation shapes democracy and health."

Riderwood and CCRCs:

- Riderwood Fact Sheet (Erickson Senior Living, 2020): 2,400+ residents, 1,400+ employees, 120-acre campus, Silver Spring, MD.
- Where You Live Matters: Riderwood managed by Erickson Senior Living, one of nation's largest CCRC operators.
- McKnights Senior Living (2025): Age Well Study confirms CCRC health advantages.

Internet Archive:

- Internet Archive Help Center (help.archive.org): Free uploading, permanent preservation, no fees.
- Internet Archive: 25+ petabytes of data, 10 million+ books and texts, 510 billion+ web URLs preserved.

Groups.io:

- Groups.io Help Center: Email-based discussion groups; subscribe via email to [GROUPNAME]+subscribe@groups.io or via web.

APPENDIX C: OTHER BOOKS BY MEL HAAS

Available free at **civicgoodbooks.com** and the Internet Archive (**archive.org**):

- *Perplexity for CCRC Residents: 50 Everyday Ways to Enrich Your Life, Serve Your Community, and Make AI Your Daily Companion*
- *CivicGood: A Call to Your Best Self* — How Retirement Community Residents Can Change the World
- *Our Collective Betrayal of America's Children*

- *CCRC Happiness & Well-Being: A Science-Based Guide to Flourishing in Your Retirement Community Years*
- *The Civil War Inside America: 1776, 2026, and the Struggle to Save the Republic*
- *The Ink of Liberty & Common Sense, 2026*
- And more than 30 Kindle titles on civic life, American democracy, AI, and community engagement

All books are written for CCRC residents and available free.

APPENDIX D: KEY CONTACTS AND LINKS

Resource	Address/Link
CivicGood subscription email	CivicGood+subscribe@groups.io
CivicGood post email	CivicGood@groups.io
CivicGood web page	https://groups.io/g/CivicGood
CivicGood Books (free PDFs)	civicgoodbooks.com
~~**Mel Haas on Amazon**~~	amazon.com/stores/Mel-Haas/author/B0GCNC7BYJ
Internet Archive	archive.org
We the Seniors	wetheseniors.org
BadAss Grandmas	badassgrandmasfordemocracy.com

Senior Citizens League	seniorsleague.org
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	rwjf.org

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Internet Archive: archive.org | civicgoodbooks.com

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🌐 **https://groups.io/g/CivicGood**

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Your voice matters. Your experience is irreplaceable. Your country needs you: